

Jesus: Immanuel and Savior
Matthew 1:18-25

Being a parent or grandparent to a newborn baby is quite a wonderful moment. If you are ever around such people you will recall them cooing, aaahhing, and very seriously observing every movement the baby makes. Out of their mouths come the most interesting comments: "I think the baby has its mother's mouth." "I think the baby has its father's eyes."

Then, around two or three years old you will hear these comments: "That child sure has its mother's patience." "That child sure has its father's inquisitiveness."

The point being, each baby born has some of the father's genes and some of the mother's genes. Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent and we prepare to celebrate the birth of a baby, a miracle of gigantic proportions! A human child in every way, being born of that young girl named Mary, with all of the human characteristics and genes of His mother that every baby ever born has.

Yet, there was something else about Him that was different from any baby born before or after Him. This baby had the genes and characteristic not of an earthly father like you and me, but the characteristic and persona of God Almighty, His Heavenly Father.

This baby was Immanuel, Jesus Christ, who came to love us and save us from our sins and eternal death as well as give us true joy, hope and peace! Immanuel: God with us! Jesus Christ: Savior/Messiah! Truly human and truly divine! Truly man and truly God!

Whether you are a Christian and have heard this account of the birth of Jesus many times or are a person who is going to hear it for the first time today, what Matthew describes in these scripture verses has profound implications for you and for your better understanding and celebration of His birth tomorrow, Christmas Day.

From these verses of God's Word we learn:

1. The significance of the Immaculate Conception, the virgin birth.
2. The profound truth of Immanuel.
3. The implication and impact for all people that this Jesus is the Savior and true Messiah.

First of all, it is vital to know that the virgin birth of Jesus gives validity to the truth of the incarnation. (verses 18-20).

How many of you have seen the new movie just released entitled, "The Nativity Story"? It is quite good compared to how Hollywood normally portrays biblical themes on film. The reality of what Mary and Joseph experienced in person, questioning and wondering about the visitation of the angel and the subsequent isolation and gossiping/slander by their friends and relatives, plus the hardship of the travel to Bethlehem and their fleeing to Egypt were effectively portrayed and very impressive.

Luke describes it this way for Mary: "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you and for this reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.*"

Jesus was truly a miracle baby. Jesus was the greatest miracle of all time! God Almighty, the creator of the entire universe interjected Himself into our time and space. In a supernatural act of almighty power God enabled this young virgin girl to be pregnant with God's only begotten son. It is vital and important that you believe that Jesus was born of this young virgin named Mary. Without a miraculous, supernatural conception there would not be a miraculous, supernatural Jesus. Without a miraculous, supernatural Jesus there would not have been a miraculous, supernatural salvation act on the cross which is the essence and centrality of Christianity.

If Jesus had been conceived like everyone else on earth then He could have been replaced in that manger with either Mohammed, Buddha, or thousands of other wise and prophetic men or women who have come along over the ages who taught moral and ethical truths to live by.

But, the miraculous birth proved that Jesus was God in human form come to this earth to fulfill the prophecies declared by the Old Testament prophets (verses 22, 23).

Matthew was recalling the prophetic word spoken by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before, that this baby would be called Immanuel, God with us!

Wow, the amazing and awesome truth that God Himself came to this earth in human form to live amongst us! This is what the apostle, John, was underscoring when he wrote: *"In the beginning was the word and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. The word became flesh and lived for awhile amongst us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

The eternal, infinite, unchangeable God, full of wisdom, goodness, holiness, power, justice, and mercy came to be with man, to be with you and me. *Jesus said, "If you see me you see the Father; the Father and I are one."*

Jesus, in the fullness of His humanness, experienced every emotion of joy and pain under the sun. Every temptation, every fear, and every worry you or I ever experience on this earth, yet never sinning.

This baby, Jesus, was the ultimate fulfilling of God's sovereign word of the promised covenant He made with His people centuries earlier. God accomplished this by leaving His perfect holy and sinless heaven and humbly coming to our imperfect sin-filled world by being born in a manger, a true example and perfect humility that Paul describes in Philippians 2:5-8.

So, on this Christmas Eve Sunday, you see anew that the little baby Jesus we are to adore, worship and whose birthday we celebrate tomorrow, is indeed now, has been and will be forevermore Almighty, sovereign God in human form.

And, the virgin birth also demonstrates that God is in control of everything in all areas of life, but particularly in His work of redemption for His beloved people:

1. Mary, the human element, was passive, but God was active.

2. God came to Mary in the fullness of His time and sent the Holy Spirit upon her.
3. God is the active agent in sending His son.
4. God is the active agent in bringing us to salvation.
5. God is in total control of your redemption.
6. God sent the prophets to prophesy about Jesus.
7. God led the wise men to Bethlehem by the star.
8. God sent the angels to the shepherds.
9. God allowed Jesus to die on the cross.
10. God raised Jesus from the dead.
11. God sent his Holy Spirit to the church.
12. God brought you to Himself and saved you.
13. Just as Jesus was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, you were saved by the supernatural working of the same Holy Spirit in your life.

Therefore, how can any of us so lightly take His birth? How can we so haphazardly make reference to Jesus? How can we so quickly remove Him from the celebration of Christmas? The world certainly does! We must not. For it has been supernaturally made known to us that that small baby, who was wrapped in clothes and lying in that manger, was none other than God Almighty in human form. Immanuel! God with us!

There is a very specific reason why Jesus came to this earth, our world that we live in, from birth to death. Jesus Christ came to this earth as Savior to redeem God's people from death, to save them and to give them eternal life (verses 21, 24-25).

The angel made it very clear to both Mary and Joseph that the baby was to be named Jesus. The meaning of the name Jesus has profound significance for God's people. Joshua, Jehovah saves; the Lord saves. The Hebrew word means Messiah, the anointed one. The Greek word means Christ, also the anointed one. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Christ, and the Anointed One who saves God's people from their sins.

Remember, the angel who appeared to the shepherds in the fields that first Christmas night declared, *"Behold, I bring you good news of great joy. Unto you has been born this day, in the City of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord."*

The apostle, Peter, in his great confession, declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus Himself gave self-testimony and affirmed His Messiah-ship frequently; *"I who speak to you am the Messiah, the Christ... I came to save what was lost. I came that they may have life eternal."*

The New Testament writers never hesitated to refer to Jesus as the Savior and the Messiah: *"God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36). In referring to Jesus, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under the sun given to men by whom they must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). *"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'"* (I Timothy 1:12). *"This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"* (I John 4:10).

There is overwhelming evidence in scripture that Jesus truly is the Messiah. He is the Savior because He was the only perfect and sinless sacrifice that God's holy justice demanded for the sins and rebellion of man. Jesus Christ paid the full penalty for your sins on the cross of Calvary. Jesus has redeemed your soul. Jesus has saved you from eternal death.

I ask you, on this day before Christmas 2006, have you received this greatest Christmas gift of all? Do you see your Savior when you contemplate or see that baby lying in the manger? Do you think about Jesus and His life giving love for you as you hustle and bustle through the busy Christmas day?

My friends, if you have placed your faith and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and have received Him as your personal Savior you are the recipient of the greatest gift you will ever receive. If you want the assurance that your sins have been forgiven and that you will be guaranteed eternal life then you must believe what the Bible says about this baby born in a manger, and trust in Him as your personal Lord and Savior.

When you do, when God brings you into that personal relationship with Him you will experience joy and peace and hope that are wonderfully transformational in your life. And Christmas will have a totally new meaning for you. I urge you, I entreat you, and I implore you. Do not let another day go by. Don't let another Christmas season pass without settling this most vital decision. Invite Jesus Christ into your heart and life. Receive Him as your Lord, Savior, Messiah.

As one rests in the reality of this amazing truth that Jesus is Immanuel and your Savior and Messiah, many blessings flow abundantly upon you. You experience the wonderful gift of an ever growing and intimate relationship with your Creator God. Why? Because Jesus perfectly revealed Who God is and that His love is unconditional and merciful. That God's will for you is perfect and that nothing can thwart its fulfillment in His perfect timing. Jesus examples for you how you are to live and think and speak so that you please, honor, and glorify God.

Jesus empowers you through the indwelling Holy Spirit to do God-honoring works for mercy and compassion that bless all those around you. So, in the midst of the very joyful celebrations you will experience tonight and tomorrow, keep ever most in your mind that when all the wrapping paper and empty gift boxes have been put away, when all the decorations have been taken down, the wonderful truth of Christmas will still be powerfully present.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Messiah is still active and vitally involved in your life and the lives of multitudes around the world who claim Him as Immanuel, God with us.